



PRESS RELEASE

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HLEB Celebrates National Eye Donor Month

Columbia, MO (March 1, 2004) – Each year, approximately 46,000 Americans receive a corneal transplant. The Heartland Lions Eye Banks (HLEB) encourages the public to learn more about eye tissue donation and to make the choice to become a donor during National Eye Donor Month in March.

Through eye donation, one person can contribute to restore or improve the sight of as many as four people through corneal transplantation. The gift of sight is the most precious gift that someone suffering from corneal blindness can receive. According to one of HLEB's cornea recipients:

"I never realized how little I was seeing. On a trip to Tennessee one beautiful spring day I could actually see the dogwood among the green trees and it was gorgeous! Colors no longer have a brown tint and road signs are readable. I'm most grateful to all the people involved that made my transplant possible."

The simplest way to become an eye donor is to place your name on your state's donor registry. Missouri's donor registry is a confidential 24-hour-a-day computerized database that documents your wishes regarding eye, organ and tissue donation. The information that you submit via the donor registry will be available to the hospital and your family at the time of your death, and will assist your family in making a decision when asked about eye donation.

The Heartland Lions Eye Banks (HLEB) is a division of the Missouri Lions Eye Research Foundation; a 501(c)(3) organization with the mission to preserve and restore the sight of people throughout Missouri and around the world. HLEB operates 6 eye bank branches throughout Missouri, Kansas and Illinois with headquarters in Columbia, Missouri. HLEB is the fourth largest eye bank in the U.S. and offers high quality donor cornea tissue to transplant surgeons around the world. In addition the Eye Bank is committed to research for causes and cures for eye diseases.

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